

Introduction to Philosophy of the Human Person

Quarter 2 – Module 4: Human Person and Death

Lesson

1

Death

What is your initial reaction when you read the title of this part of the module? Is death really a terrifying phenomenon? If death is a dreadful thing, what makes it fearsome?

On the other hand, death, as part of human reality, may have meaningful messages. At this junction, we will try to uncover the mystery of death by rationalizing its phenomenon so that we get to understand it better, accept it as part of human nature, and treat it as a condition that allows us to create a meaningful existence.



What is It

Phenomenological Notion of Death

According to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) in his book *Being and Time*, death is (a) certain, (b) indefinite, (c) one's property, (d) non-relational, and (e) not to be outstripped.

Death is certain. As part of humanness, we are all born (in Heideggerian sense, we are “thrown”) in the world. The world is governed by time. We, humans, are existing in time, thus, as being thrown in the world, we have beginning and since we are finite beings, we also have end – death. Birth and death are two things we cannot remove from our existence. Whether we like it or not, we will die.

Death is indefinite. While death is sure to come, it is however indefinite as to when it will come. Death is impending, meaning to say, it can happen anytime. We do not know exactly when. That is why, we should try to live the best life that we can for we never know the day of our end.

Death is one's property. The death of the person belongs to him. Nobody can experience his death except himself. There can be no proxies or substitutes for a person in experiencing death.

Death is non-relational. This means that when we die, we die alone. We have no choice but to face it on our own. Death also removes all our relations to others. In contemplating death, we realize our own individuality and independence from the world.

Death is not to be outstripped. Death cannot be taken away from a person. Even the person himself cannot remove the possibility of death in his life. One cannot make himself live forever. Even though we see in fiction movies the idea of immortality, death, in real life is a definite reality which we nothing can be done to be outstripped.